

New Hampshire  
*Department of Agriculture,  
Markets & Food*

## **Getting What You Pay For**

By Richard Cote, Director  
**Division of Weights & Measures**

An off-duty Weights and Measures Investigator was recently shopping at a local Concord mall. Going by a candy store, he observed a long line of people waiting to make a holiday purchase. He noticed that the customers were being cheated. How could he determine cheating going on if he was looking through a window at a scale that was about 15 feet away? He kept his focus on the "weight" indication of the scale.

All commodities, food, fuel, etc., must be sold by net weight. Net weight means the weight of an item excluding packaging, wrappings, etc. In other words, if candy is being offered at \$12.95 a pound, a customer pays only for the weight of the candy. Otherwise, there would be no consistency in the quantity of any item and the process would be rife with fraud. As it is, our investigators are finding too many incidences where a customer is being overcharged because of "short weight."

In the situation dealing with the off-duty investigator, it was determined that the customer was being overcharged \$1.42 because the clerk failed to deduct the weight of the container that weighed 0.11 pound. How can you protect yourself from being cheated?

When you stand in front of a scale at a deli counter, for example, the "weight" indication of the scale should show a negative number before the sale is completed. If the sale is done at checkout, the net weight should show on the receipt. Look at the weight of the product on the monitor. If the item is in a container or bag, the weight on the receipt should be less than what you see on monitor.

To quote from this state's first Commissioner of Weights and Measures, Harold A. Webster, who served from 1919 to about 1931, "when fraudulent short weight or measure is discovered, the purchaser should take steps to have the offender punished...to fail to do so is equivalent to neglecting the rights of other purchasers...and also the right of the honest merchant...since his trade may be taken away on account of prices at his competitor's store, which are apparently, but not actually, lower."

Please report any short transactions to the Division of Weights & Measures at 271-3700.

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